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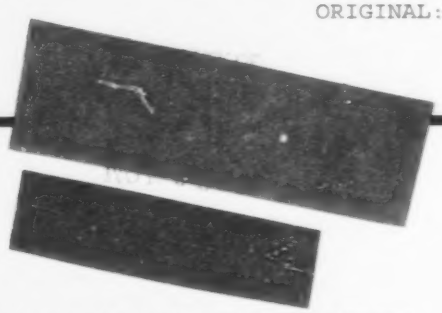

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UNDP: COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORKS AND RELATED MATTERS

FIRST COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR BENIN (1997-2001)

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INTRODUCTION

1. This cooperation framework is part of the implementation of the political options proclaimed in 1990 by the National Conference of Vital Elements of the Nation [Conférence des forces vives de la Nation]. These options were confirmed by the round-table conference held in April 1992 in Geneva - which provided a basis for the preparation of central development policies and programmes - and by the National Economic Conference held in December 1996. The operational frame of reference for the programmes contained in this cooperation framework is the country strategy note drawn up by the Government in collaboration with the United Nations system, and adopted by the Government in January 1997.

I. DEVELOPMENT SITUATION FROM A SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

A. Development policies and results achieved

2. After some two decades under a managed economy, Benin has since 1990 been going through profound changes directed towards the introduction of both economic liberalization and democratic pluralism. Despite continuing structural weaknesses, the reforms undertaken under the three structural adjustment programmes have, since 1991, achieved remarkable results: (a) the gross domestic product (GDP) has grown on average by 4 per cent in real terms; (b) the public finances have been rehabilitated; (c) inflation - which soared to 54 per cent following the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 - was kept down to 3.1 per cent in 1995.

3. The positive social results achieved include the following: (a) life expectancy at birth has risen from 48.3 years in 1985 to 55.1 years in 1994; (b) the infant mortality rate has fallen by 30 per cent over the past 20 years and is now 94 per 1,000 live births; (c) the percentage of the population with access to safe water has increased from 50 per cent in 1990 to 58 per cent in 1995; and (d) the net school enrolment rate has gone from 47.2 per cent in 1985 to 38 per cent in 1990 and to 48.8 per cent in 1993.

4. Notwithstanding the encouraging results achieved, the economic reforms have had little effect on the precariousness of the population's living conditions. According to the Human Development Report, 1996, Benin ranks 131st out of 174 countries in terms of real per capita income ($1,500 worldwide) and 154th in terms of the human development index (0.327).

B. Eradication of poverty: profile and strategies

5. Analysis of the situation shows that poverty is widespread and is on the increase. Income is extremely low. In rural areas more than half of the households live below or very close to the poverty line, whereas in urban areas 31 per cent of households are below the poverty line and 55 per cent are very close to it.

6. In the context of the plan of action on the social dimension of development and of the job creation programme, the Government has opted for grass-roots community capacity-building as one of the strategies for eradicating poverty and supporting the decentralization process.

C. Promotion of productive employment

7. Since systematic recruitment to the civil service was suspended in 1986, the solutions that have been applied to the problem of unemployment have not met the expectations of the jobless. Wage earners constitute only 5.2 per cent of the economically active population of Benin. The agricultural sector, which employs 55.9 per cent of the economically active population and provides 70 per cent of jobs in rural areas, remains the major provider of jobs. However, the level of employment in that sector is growing slowly, the annual average rate being below 1 per cent. At the same time, it is estimated that the economically active population of Benin will increase by 82,000 per annum until 1997 and by 104,200 each year between 1997 and 2002. In order to deal with this situation, many job creation schemes and support programmes have been established to increase the potential for job creation in the various sectors of the economy.

D. Promotion of good governance

8. In spite of the significant advances achieved by Benin in the consolidation of the democratization process that began in 1990, many challenges remain to be met, particularly with respect to the clarification of the role of the State, the operation of institutions to ensure checks and balances and the organization of civil society. The private sector remains very fragile because it is subject to legislative, administrative, fiscal and judicial constraints. The only effects of the reforms undertaken under the structural adjustment programme have been the reduction in the size of the civil service and the restructuring of the direct management services of the macroeconomic stabilization policies. This was why, in 1995, the Government adopted a framework programme on capacity-building in the area of development management.

E. Integration of women's issues in development

9. Women account for 51.4 per cent of the Beninese population and the importance of their contribution to the country's economy is self-evident; 21.3 per cent of all households are headed by women. Women account for 60 per cent of the agricultural population and 32 per cent of the workforce in the agricultural sector. About 44.8 per cent of working women are employed in trade and the food industry (mainly in food preparation), where they represent 91.5 per cent of the working population, and 41.6 per cent of working women are employed in agriculture; these two sectors account for 88 per cent of the gross domestic product of Benin. Unfortunately, although women account for half the population and make a significant contribution to the economy this is not reflected at the administrative and political level, because of the low standard

of education among women and their under-representation in the National Assembly, the Government and the other institutions of the State.

10. Girls comprise only 32.9 per cent of the school population. Only about 30.8 per cent of women in rural areas have received at least a primary schooling, as compared with 42.5 per cent of men. Illiteracy rates among women range from 84.6 per cent in the rural areas to 40 per cent in the towns, whereas, the corresponding rates among men are 69.3 per cent and 13.5 per cent. In addition to these factors, there are: (a) cultural obstacles which are detrimental to women's rights; (b) the lack of any procedures to ensure their participation in the taking of decisions concerning their future; (c) unequal access to the means of production; and (d) the excessive burden of educating children and other domestic obligations which they have to reconcile with income-producing activities.

11. With a view to the gradual elimination of these constraints, the Government has just created an Office of the Status of Women within the Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and the Status of Women. It also plans to revamp the Commission for the Integration of Women in Development, to incorporate women's issues in all its strategies to combat poverty, and to step up ongoing initiatives on behalf of women, both at the national level (Penal Code, Individual and Family Code) and in the context of new resolutions adopted by international conferences convened under United Nations auspices.

F. Environmental protection

12. The main problems identified are: (a) the imbalance between the rate at which national resources are consumed and the rate at which they are renewed; (b) failure to integrate environmental aspects into sectoral policies and strategies; (c) failure to harness rainwater resources; (d) poor management of solid waste and domestic sewage; (e) the lack of any strategy to stem industrial pollution and seashore erosion; (f) the scale of human damage to the environment.

13. In order to combat the deterioration of its environment, Benin has established an Environmental Action Plan and its national Agenda 21 programme. The Government has also established the Beninese Environmental Agency and the Beninese Centre for Sustainable Development which will act as a high-level consultative body for the follow-up of the various initiatives.

G. Future development policies

14. In October 1996, the Government announced its overall vision of the country's future, comprising the following six main points: (a) the promotion of democracy and the rule of law; (b) unity in diversity; (c) solidarity and sharing; (d) the strengthening of economic development and job creation; (e) enhancement of the role of women and young people; (f) the promotion of Benin's influence abroad through judicious exploitation of its comparative advantages and potential. That vision was endorsed by the National Economic Conference.

15. The development policies designed to translate that vision into reality are in keeping with the priorities identified in the country strategy note and are designed to create favourable conditions to enable all grass-roots communities to benefit from a common minimum social standard. In the medium term, round-table meetings will continue to provide political guidance, and long-term development strategies will continue to be defined within the context of the ongoing long-term forward-looking surveys.

II. RESULTS AND LESSONS OF PAST COOPERATION

A. Results, impact and constraints

16. UNDP cooperation with Benin in the context of the fifth programming cycle (1993-1997) focused on two areas: strengthening of financial and economic management ability and improving the population's living conditions. The activities undertaken involved: (a) development of tools for analysing and measuring the scope of poverty; (b) follow-up and evaluation of the employment situation; (c) support for grass-roots communities in improving their living conditions; (d) support for good governance through administrative reform, strengthening of the judicial authorities and implementation of the national programme for revitalizing the private sector.

17. At the operational level, the projects helped to enhance the self-development capacity of rural communities by helping them increase their income and gain greater access to social services. The credit component that was introduced into rural areas in collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund provided the rural population with easier access to credit, led to increased local savings and household incomes, and helped foster a spirit of entrepreneurship.

18. With respect to the preparation of development policies and the mobilization of resources, the Government benefited from the support provided by UNDP; the latter worked with the leading bilateral partners and the multilateral agencies to conduct the round-table process. Lastly, UNDP provided support for national governmental structures and non-governmental organizations (NGO) in connection with Benin's participation in the world summits organized under United Nations auspices and the preparation and/or implementation of the associated national action plans.

19. The difficulties encountered included the following: (a) delays in programme implementation due to the time it took to prepare the sectoral and thematic strategies from which the support programmes were to ensue; and (b) the time needed for completion of the preparatory work during the period of transition from the project approach to the implementation of the programme approach and of the new programming mechanisms approved by the UNDP Executive Board.

B. Lessons learned from cooperation with UNDP

20. The main lessons learned may be summarized as follows: (a) capacity-building is more sustainable when it targets grass-roots community structures rather than local State structures; (b) the very strong local presence of Benin's principal donors limits the possibilities for resource mobilization in the form of parallel financing; (c) resource mobilization in the form of cost-sharing is therefore possible only through high-quality projects and programmes that are likely to interest donors; (d) the promotion of good governance requires an approach that combines administrative reforms, democratization, human rights and decentralization; and (e) to ensure that the round-table mechanism plays a more effective role in development policy formulation, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system should collaborate more closely with the bilateral donors designated as sectoral leaders.

III. PROPOSED STRATEGY AND THEMATIC AREAS

21. In view of the foregoing, the Government's cooperation with UNDP during the period 1997-2001 will reflect a two-tiered approach: (a) consolidating the primary gains of the fifth cycle in terms of building technical capacity to analyse, monitor and assess the situation of poverty in the country and to better define the State's role in anti-poverty efforts; and (b) ensuring that all its actions reflect the principle of responsible participation by the target groups (the poor) and widely disseminating these values and principles to all the other agents of development. In this connection, UNDP will focus its core resources on three national programmes corresponding to two major thematic areas: (a) poverty elimination and (b) promotion of good governance.

A. Poverty elimination

22. Following the round table held in Geneva in 1992, the Government adopted poverty elimination as the primary objective of its development policies and strategies. The framework for implementing these policies and strategies through operational programmes has yet to be built. The current phase consists of the elaboration of a national community development programme by a joint mission of non-governmental organizations and the Government, with support from UNDP.

Programme No. 1: National community development framework programme

23. In general, this programme is aimed at promoting endogenous grass-roots community development through the active participation of the populations concerned in strategic decision-making and in the mobilization of the resources needed to execute programmes of action to combat poverty.

24. UNDP areas of concentration. Initially, the Government obtained UNDP support for the formulation of the national framework programme. Subsequently, the Government plans to focus UNDP support for the programme on initiatives to put communities themselves in charge of poverty eradication efforts. UNDP is

expected to provide a financial package of about $5.6 million, at least half of which will be earmarked for activities relating to the advancement of women.

25. Expected impact. The programme should help the Government to combat poverty by delegating responsibility for decisions concerning local development priorities and the means of addressing them to grass-roots communities, so that they may take full advantage of the benefits offered by the decentralization law. With UNDP support, the Government also plans to foster a new spirit of self-employment and self-help that will enable populations to organize themselves better and to generate locally the resources needed for their development.

B. Promotion of good governance

26. UNDP support is requested for two national programmes: (a) the framework programme on capacity-building in the area of institutional management and (b) the national programme to revitalize the private sector.

Programme No. 2: Framework programme on capacity-building in the area of institutional management

27. This programme, adopted in December 1995, is aimed at redefining the role of the Government and of the State and contributing to managerial capacity-building, administrative reform and modernization and consolidation of the democratic and decentralization processes. This last objective links up with the community development programme's objectives concerning good governance at the local level.

28. UNDP areas of concentration. The UNDP support programme was approved in November 1996. It revolves around the following areas: (a) rationalization of administrative structures through the establishment of a service performance evaluation system; (b) strengthening of the investment programming system and capacity-building in terms of economic policy impact analysis and forecasting; (c) strengthening of the round-table mechanism; (d) capacity-building in the area of monitoring social change; (e) capacity-building for the administrative bodies of the decentralized entities to be established; and (f) strengthening of the judicial system and of structures and organizations for the defence and promotion of human rights. UNDP assistance will amount to $5.5 million.

29. Expected impact. The end-of-programme assessment will focus on: (a) the public sector's level of performance, particularly with respect to the provision of services to population groups and, especially, to private-sector actors; (b) the effectiveness of strategic development management; (c) ongoing participation by advisory bodies (Economic and Social Council), legislative bodies and partners of civil society in formulating development strategies; and (d) provision of appropriate technical services and information systems to institutions of the system of checks and balances, to enable them to perform their missions autonomously and independently.

Programme No. 3: National programme to revitalize the private sector

30. This programme's strategy has two orientations: (a) modernization of economic activities by focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), micro-enterprises and cottage industries so as to direct them towards more productive activities and pave the way for future SMEs; and (b) capacity-building in support institutions to promote their autonomous development and to enable them to build a special relationship with private economic operators.

31. UNDP areas of concentration. The UNDP programme to support the national programme was launched at the end of 1995 with a budget of $3 million. It covers the current programming cycle. It emphasizes (a) reform of the sector's legislative framework and rationalization of procedures for establishing enterprises; (b) strengthening of the Government's investment policy through revision of the investment code; (c) consolidation of the progress made in strengthening dialogue between the Government and the private sector; and (d) promotion of new areas with strong growth potential.

32. Expected impact. Between 1997 and 1999, four codes governing the environment in which the private sector operates will be adopted. The Chambers of Commerce and Agriculture will become credible private-sector institutions capable of initiating and maintaining dialogue between the private sector and the State, and the free zone and the one-stop system will become operational. These results should boost investor confidence and increase the equity capital needed to promote growth in the private sector and partnership between the State and the private sector. This will enable the State to focus more on its essential missions, as defined in the managerial capacity-building programme.

33. In addition to these areas of concentration, UNDP will work with the Government and its development partners in building national capacity in specific areas directly related to its mandate, namely: integration of women in development, particularly in the context of follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action; support for environmental protection in the context of Agenda 21 and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification; efforts to combat human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS); disaster management; and coordinated monitoring of the implementation of the conclusions of world conferences organized under the auspices of the United Nations.

IV. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

A. Execution and implementation

34. UNDP support programmes will be implemented according to the mechanisms provided for in the country strategy note and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 47/199 on the programme approach and the rationalization of programming and execution procedures. Emphasis will be placed on the execution of programmes by national entities with technical support from UNDP and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, with a view to building national capacities for programme management, monitoring and assessment.

B. Monitoring and assessment

35. The institutional framework for programme coordination and monitoring is the one contained in the country strategy note. It includes a Coordinating Committee with a Technical Secretariat. The Coordinating Committee is a forum for dialogue chaired by the Minister of Planning. It includes all the technical ministries, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and representatives of civil society. The Technical Secretariat consists of the ministries involved in development cooperation: namely, the Ministries of Planning, Foreign Affairs and Finance.

36. Detailed monitoring and assessment mechanisms will be defined by each of the three programmes. The cooperation framework will be assessed through annual reports and a biennial mid-term report. The preparation of the biennial report will coincide with the mid-term review of the country strategy note. The biennial report will assess the status of implementation of the strategies, the degree to which the objectives have been met and the level of resource mobilization for programme execution.

C. Resource mobilization

37. Core resources. The amount of UNDP funds allocated for the period 1997-2001 under TRAC 1.1.1 (target for resource assignment from the core) is $13,024 million. To this amount should be added the fifth-cycle carry-over, estimated at $4,317 million as at 31 December 1996. Total core programme resources for this period (1997-2001) amount to $17,995 million.

38. Other resources. The total expected amount from non-UNDP sources of financing is $8 million. In this context, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has already committed to an amount of $6 million in the form of signed project documents in areas related to anti-poverty efforts. In addition to these resources, UNCDF will conduct a programming exercise in 1998.

39. In the area of environment, the commitments of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for ongoing projects amount to $1 million. Moreover, efforts are under way, at the level of UNDP representatives, to take advantage of the GEF Small Grants Programme. Other sources to be explored include funds from Special Programme Resources for anti-poverty efforts, Capacity 21 funds to support the national Agenda 21 programme and GEF funds for the elaboration of a biological diversity conservation strategy.

40. Priority will be given to the use of core resources. However, UNDP will continue to support the Government's resource mobilization efforts through the round-table process and through the formulation of high-quality programmes to be co-financed with donors.

Annex

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION TARGET TABLE FOR BENIN (1997-2001)

(In thousands of United States dollars)

Source	Amount	Comments
UNDP CORE FUNDS		
Estimated IPF carry-over	4 317	
TRAC 1.1.1	13 024	Assigned immediately to country.
TRAC 1.1.2	0 to 66.7 per cent of TRAC 1.1.1	This range of percentages is presented for initial planning purposes only. The actual assignment will depend on the availability of high-quality programmes. Any increase in the range of percentages would also be subject to availability of resources.
SPPD/STS	654	
Subtotal	17 995[a]	
NON-CORE FUNDS		
Government cost-sharing	-	
Sustainable development funds	2 500	$500 foreseen as a revision of the project financed by the Government of Japan in the area of strengthening the judiciary. $2,000 will be sought from other partners to co-finance the community development programme and other rehabilitation activities.
Third-party cost-sharing	1 000	$700 has been committed from GEF resources. $300 will be sought from GEF to finance diversity conservation activities.
Funds, trust funds and other	8 000	UNCDF has already assigned and set aside resources.
Subtotal	11 500	
GRAND TOTAL	29 495[a]	

[a] Not inclusive of TRAC 1.1.2, which is allocated regionally for subsequent country application.

Abbreviations: GEF = Global Environment Facility; IPF = indicative planning figure; SPPD = support for policy and programme development; STS = support for technical services; TRAC = target for resource assignment from the core; UNCDF = United Nations Capital Development Fund.